Public Library Development In West Bengal : A Review

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Draws an outline picture of the Public Library development in West Bengal. The whole history of library development has been divided into three distinct phases :—(1) *Pre-independence days* (2) *Post independence days from* 1947-1977 *and* (3) *the library development since* 1977, *the period of the Left Front Govt. Attempts to make a comparative study of the growth with relevant data, particularly during the last two phases. Suggests measures to be taken for improvement of Public Library Service in West Bengal.*

1. DEVELOPMENT OF LIBRARIES IN BENGAL BEFORE INDEPENDENCE

11 *ASIATIC SOCIETY LIBRARY*

Library development was initiated in undivided Bengal in the second half of the eighteenth century. The establishment of the Asiatic Society and its Library in 1784 to promote studies and research on such subjects as history, archaeology, science, art and culture, languages, etc., related to Asia was the begining of modern library movement in Bengal. This library was first located at the office of Sir William Jones, the great Indologist and founder of the Society. It was ultimately shifted to the present location of the Society at the Park Street, Calcutta. This Institute possesses richest collection on Asiatic and Indological subjects in India. Prior to 1830, Indians were debarred from the membership of this Society and the library attached to it. Eminent linguist Ramkamal Sen and Indologist Rajendralal Mitra were Librarians of this Society's Library. Prior to the establishment of the Asiatic Society, a few libraries were established by the Christian Missionaries for their own use.

12 *FORT WILLIAM COLLEGE LIBRARY*

Though the Fort William College was established in 1800 A.D. to help the English civilians to learn Indian languages, its Library was open to the citizens of Calcutta. This library had a good collection of books and manuscripts on Indology. William Hunter was the first Librarian of the Fort William College. After a few years he got an assistant named Mohonprasad Thakur who was also the compiler of some dictionaries. After the dissolution of the college in 1830, its rich collection was distributed to the Libraries of London, to the Library of the Asiatic Society of Bengal and to the Calcutta Public Library.

13 *ACADEMIC LIBRARIES*

In the first half of the nineteenth century the following other educational institutions were established in undivided Bengal : Hindu College (now known as Presidency College) (1817), Srerampur College (1818), Oriental Seminary (1823), Sanskrit College (1824), General Assembly (now known as Scottish Church College) (1830), St. Xaviers College (1835). Gradually libraries were also developed in these institutions. The Calcutta School Book Society also had a beautiful library for its own use. The University of Calcutta was established in 1857. Its library also came into existence after a few years.

14 *SPECIALIST LIBRARIES*

Along with the development of libraries attached to general educational institutions, following libraries with specialized collections were also established in the nineteenth century : Calcutta Medical College Library (1835), Geological Survey of India Library (1851), Bengal Engineering College Library (1856) and the Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science Library (1876).

15 *CALCUTTA PUBLIC LIBRARY*

The first attempt to establish a Public Library in modern Bengal was made in 1835. Eminent and distinguished personalities of the then Calcutta met in a public meeting on 20th August, 1835 and adopted the following resolution :

"That it is expedient and necessary to establish in Calcutta a Public Library of reference and circulation that shall be opened to all ranks and classes without distinction and sufficiently extensive to supply the wants of the entire community in every department of literature."

As a result of this effort the *Calcutta Public Library* came into existence on 21st March 1836.

The Calcutta Public Library was opened to the public on the ground floor of the residence of Dr. F. P. Strong, civil surgeon of the 24 Parganas. After a temporary shift to Fort William in July 1841, the Library was finally removed to the first floor of Metcalfe Hall on the Strand Road.

"Many eminent citizens of Calcutta—both Indians and Europeans, joined the Library either as proprieters or as subscribers during its long and eventful career, Among the Indian patrons, mention may be made of Dwarakanath Tagore, Debendranath Tagore, Prasanna Kumar Tagore, Ram Gopal Ghosh, Rustomjee Cowasjee, Raja Satya Chandra Ghoshal, Nrityalal Sil, Pratap Chandra Singh, Radhanath Sikdar, Peary Chand Mitra, Rasamay Datta, Rasik Krishna Mallik, Sashi Chandra Datta, Kishori Chand Mitra, Sambhunath Pandit and Dr. Mohendralal Sarkar. These are well-known names to the students' of nineteenth century Bengal. Of the European patrons, the following names deserve particular mention : T. B. Macaulay, J. C. Marshman, Lord Metcalfe, James Princep, Sir John Peter Grant, J. E. D. Bethune and H. Beveridge" (B. S. Kesavan—India's National Library, P. 4).

Though the initiative to establish this Library was taken up by both Europeans and Indians, the man behind the establishment of this Library was Mr. J. S. Siddons, the ex-Editor of *Englishman* who found the city of Calcutta "destitute of a Public Library". Peary Chand Mitra and Bipinchandra Pal, two eminent sons of Bengal were attached to this Library as Librarians. It is stated that the European communiy of the then Calcutta lost their interest about this after the mutiny of eighteen fifty seven and the condition of this Library deteriorated by the end of the nineteenth century. Lord Curzon, the then Viceroy of India, purchased its collection and merged it with the *Imperial Library*, founded by him in 1903. Mr. John Macfarlane of the British Museum was appointed its Librarian. This Imperial Library was ultimately transformed into the *National Library of India* after independence and was shifted from its earlier location at Esplanade East of Belvedere, Alipur, though the newspaper reading room of the library is still there.

16 *GROWTH OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES*

The establishment of the Calcutta Public Library had an effect among the enlightened people of the nineteenth century. As a result, under their leadership quite a good number of public libraries were established in different districts of undivided Bengal by the end of the nineteenth century. Some of the public libraries, established in the nineteenth century in this part of Bengal (West Bengal) are : (1) Rajnarayan Basu Smriti Pathagar (Midnapur)—established in 1851. Its earlier name was *Bayley Hall Library*. Now it is a Government sponsored Primary Unit Library, (2) Hooghly Public Library—established in 1854, (3) Krishnanagar Public Library (Nadia District)—established in 1856. Presently it is a Government-sponsored Town Library, (4) Konnagar Public Library (Hooghly Distrit)—established in 1858. It is also a Government-sponsored Town Library now, (5) Uttarpara Public Library (Hooghly District)—established in 1859. It is a Govt. Library and re-named as "Uttarpara Joykrishna Public Library", (6) Bandhab Library (at Jaynagar-Majilpur, 24-Parganas District)—established in 1869. It is now a Govt. sponsored Town Library, (7) Ariadaha Association Library (24 Parganas District)—established in 1870. Now it is a Govt. sponsored Primary Unit Library, (8) Srirampur Public Library (Hooghly District)—established in 1871. The Library is a Govt. sponsored Town Library now, (9) United Reading Room (near the Chitpur Road and Beadon Street in Calcutta)—established in 1872, (10) Ambica Sadharan Pathagar (Ambica-Kalna, Burdwan) established in 1872, (11) Chandannagar Pustakagar (Hooghly District)—established in 1873. It is now a Govt.-sponsored Town Library, (12) Sashipada Institute (24-Paraganas)—established in 1876. (13) Baranagar Peoples' Library (24-Parganas District)—established in 1876, (14) Indian Association Library (Calcutta)—established in 1876. (15) Rajpur Public Library (24-Parganas District)—established in 1877—is a Govt.-sponsored Town Library at present, (16) Sadharan Brahmo Samaj Library, (Calcutta)—established in 1879, (17) Sibpur Public Library (Howrah District)—established in 1879. (18) Mudialy Public Library (Garden Reach, 24-Parganas District)—established in 1881—

is a Govt.-sponsored Town Library now, (19) Taltala Public Library (Calcutta)—established in 1882, (20) Bagbazar Reading Library (Calcutta)—established in 1883. It is also a Govt.-sponsored Primary Unit Library now, (21) Rashpur People's Library (Howrah)—established in 1883, (22) Pragati Pathagar (Ghatal, Midnapore District)—established in 1883, (23) Bantra Public Library (Howrah District)—established in 1884, (24) Bally Public Library (Howrah District)—established in 1885—is now a Govt.-sponsored Town Library, (25) Kumartuli Institute Library (Calcutta)—established in 1884, (26) Andul-Mohiary Public Library (Howrah District)—established in 1886—is a Govt.-sponsored Rural Library at present. (27) Mug-Kalyan Pally Bharati Granthagar (Howrah District)—established in 1888—is a Govt.-sponsored Rural Library now. (28) Chaitanya Library (Calcutta)—established in 1889 (29) Sporting Club Library (Howrah)—established in 1889, (30) Kalighat Library & Free Reading Room (Calcutta)—established in 1889, (31) Bharati Parishad Library (Calcutta)—established in 1890, (32) Bansberia Public Library (Hooghly District)—established in 1891—is a Govt.-sponsored Town Library, (33) Agarpara Pathagar (24 Parganas)—established in 1891, (34) University Institute Library (Calcutta)—established in 1891, (35) Bangiya Sahitya Parishad Library (Calcutta)—established in 1893, (36) Sripur Kalyan Samity Library (Hooghly District)—established in 1894, (37) Jamgram Nandi Sadharan Pathagar (Hooghly District)—established in 1894, (38) Mondlai Public Library—established in 1894—at present it is a Govt.-sponsored Rural Library, (39) Belur Public Library (Howrah District)—established in 1895, (40) Y.M.C.A. Library (Calcutta)—established in 1895. (41) Baneapukur Library (Calcutta)—established in 1897, (42) Ramakrishna Library (Sargachhi)—established in 1897, (43) Saraswati Institute (Calcutta)—established in 1898, (44) Friends Union Library (Howrah)—established in 1898, (45) Kamala Library (Baruipur, 24 Parganas)—established in 1898, (46) Kakatia Public Library—established in 1899, (47) Vivekananda Granthagar (Suri, Birbhum District)—established in 1900.

These libraries were established by a band of devoted people, who believed that public libraries can play a vital role in the upliftment of educational and cultural level of the people. Though the services of these libraries were confined to a section of the educated middle and upper classes still they played an important role in the development of our national consciousness. It is interesting to note that some of the disciples of Derozio played an important part in establishing these libraries.

17 *PUBLIC LIBRARIES AND FREEDOM MOVEMENT*

At the begining of the twentieth century the library movement in Bengal got special impetus from the freedom movement of our country. Hundreds of libraries were established in villages and towns, mainly at the initiative of groups of young people. They were then organizing, centring these libraries, with patriotic zeal. Many proscribed and revolutionary documents were kept in these libraries, which were secretly circulated among the young people. The then imperialist power in India was not at all interested in the spread of mass education. On the other hand they were afraid of spread of political consciousness

or discontent through these libraries. Naturally, they were not happy with the growth of these libraries. So, instead of receiving Govt.'s assistance, many of these public libraries became victims of harassment. Many of these public libraries were frequently raided by police force of the imperialist power, their organisers were arrested and the books and other reading materials which were taken away by the police were never returned back. These libraries were then managed by raising donations, both money and books, from the common people.

18 *BENGAL LIBRARY ASSOCIATION*

This was the socio-political background when the Bengal Library Association was established on the 20th December, 1925, to organise and to co-ordinate the library movement in a planned manner. Poet Rabindra Nath Tagore was its first President. Poet Tagore's writings about the aims and functions of libraries are always inspiring guidelines to the people connected with the library movement in Bengal.

2. PUBLIC LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT IN WEST BENGAL AFTER INDEPENDENCE : FIRST THIRTY YEARS (1947-1977) : DURING CONGRESS RULE

At the time of independence there were nearly 5000 public libraries, managed by the common people, in different districts of West Bengal. After independence the State Govt. took some programme for development of public libraries from the second plan period onwards. As a result, following 762 Govt.-controlled and sponsored public libraries were established until 1977, when the Left-Front came to power in West Bengal : (a) 1 State Central Library, (b) 20 District Libraries, (c) 37 Subdivisional/Town Libraries, (d) 701 Rural/Area Libraries, and (e) 3 more Central Libraries. Though this step for library development was a departure from the preceeding period under British rule, it had the following defects and lacuna :

21 *LIBRARY LEGISLATION IGNORED*

The long-felt demand for library legislation for co-ordination, integration and planned development of public library services in this State was not given due consideration. During this period four States of India, namely, Tamilnadu, Andhrapradesh, Karnataka and Maharastra had enacted Public Library Laws. Though the undivided Bengal was a pioneer state in Library Movement in India, its demand for enactment of Public Library Law was turned down again and again.

22 *SCANTY AND UNPLANNED DEVELOPMENT*

The aforesaid number from then existing public-managed libraries were converted into Govt.-sponsored public libraries in an unplanned manner, in a haphazard way. For example, there were at that time 335 blocks in the State, out of which some had 1 or 2 Govt.-sponsored libraries, and quite a good num-

ber of blocks had no Govt.-sponsored libraries at all. 63 municipal towns and some town-like areas were not covered by Govt.-sponsored town/subdivisional library system. A district library was established in a village. Large number of villages having population of 5000 or more were not covered by Govt.-sponsored Rural/Area Library system. Govt.-sponsored libraries were created haphazardly by political pressure and individual influence, not considering the need and existing conditions of library services in the locality.

23 *MEAGRE GRANTS FOR LIBRARY SERVICES*

Govt.-controlled and sponsored public libraries at that time were severely affected by financial crisis. By the end of 1976 the State Govt. used to spend approximately eight million ruppees annually (80 lakhs) for development and maintenance of public libraries. A very small part of this amount was spent for purchase of documents. For example, Rural/Area Libraries, numbering 701, received no grant for purchase of books. They had grant for staff salaries and annual grant of Rs. 600|- for contingency expenditure. Town/Sub-Divisional and District Libraries had meagre grant of Rs. 1800|- and Rs. 3000|- respectively for purchase of books every year. There were no grants for purchase of periodicals, furniture and for preservation of library materials to any of these libraries.

24 *DISTRESSING CONDITIONS OF LIBRARY EMPLOYEES*

Salary and service conditions of library staff were extremely distressing. When the scheme was introduced in the year 1956 all of them were on consolidated pay having no scales of pay and allowances. A fulltime Rural Librarian used to get a consolidated pay of Rs. 75|- per month and a full-time District Librarian used to get a consolidated pay of Rs. 250|- per month. Later on some very poor scales of pay were introduced for them. There were no retirement benefits and no service rules for them. Library staffs were given Dearness Allowance at a lower rate than those given to Govt. employees. They were debarred from House Rent Allowance, Medical Allowance, Hill Allowance and other economic benefits. As a result they were veitims of frustration.

25 *NO INTEGRATED LIBRARY SERVICE*

Libraries were functioning in a disjointed manner, having no integration and co-ordination among them. It is now a well established fact that for rendering effective library services, co-ordination and integration of libraries through a network is an essential condition.

26 *BIASED BOOK SELECTION*

Some of the reading materials, occasionally supplied by the State Govt., reflected biasness. Sometimes even multiple copies of a document not likely to be used by the users of a particular type of library were supplied. Libraries had little freedom to choose their titles.

27 *NON-GOVT. LIBRARIES IGNORED*

There were many non-sponsored public libraries at that time, rendering valuable services to the people. As the development of Govt.-sponsored public libraries were uneven and not in all parts of the State, it was expected that these libraries would receive some sort of assistance from the government for maintenance of services. But their expectations were not fulfilled. Only a few of these libraries used to receive very meagre amount of assistance at an interval of years.

28 *LIBRARY MOVEMENT IGNORED*

In all phases of library development, views and opinions of persons and organisations connected with library movement were not given due consideration. There was an indifferent attitude on the part of the State Govt., towards the library movement of this State.

29 *NO PROPER LIBRARY POLICY*

Lastly, there was lack of understanding about the perspective of library movement. That, libraries in a developing country like India can play a vital role in the eradication of illiteracy, superstitions and parochial outlooks, in the programmes for uplift of social, economic and cultural level of the community, in the preservation of democracy and democratic ideals, and in dissemination of information for life and living of the people were never conceived and understood by political leaders, administrators and planners at that time. As a result, few libraries were developed as show pieces, but not as functional social institutions for common people. Many of these libraries were pressurized to procure cheap novelettes and crime fiction to cater the need of a section of middle class people. The congress govt., representing the class interest of landlord-bourgeoisie of our country, were never interested in mass education. Compulsory free primary education, adult education and public library services are all very important components of mass eduction. But all these programmes have been severely neglected during the congress peripd.

3. PUBLIC LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT DURING THE LEFT FRONT PERIOD SINCE 1977

The Left Fornt in West Bengal took a different attitude towards library development when they came into power in 1977. Important developments in the field of public library services since 1977 are as follows :

31 *NEW LIBRARY POLICY*

In developing library services a new outlook was developed. Instead of considering the libraries as mere recreational centres, these were conceived as vital social institutions for mass education. That the public libraries can play vital roles in the eradication of illiteracy and retention of newly acquired literacy,

in the development of social and democratic ideals and values, in nourishment of healthy cultural outlook against decadence and degeneration, in the struggle against obscurantism and in the provision of information for socio-economic development of the country were conceived by many persons connected with library development work during this period.

32 *WEST BENGAL PUBLIC LIBRARIES ACT*

(a) When the Left Front fought the West Bengal Legislative Assembly election in 1977, they assured in their election manifesto that a public library system will be developed through library legislation. This is for the first time, not only in the history of West Bengal but may be in the entire Indo-Pak sub-continent, that library development was made an issue in a political battle like election.

(b) After assuming power, the Left Front Govt. constituted an expert committee to draft a Public Library Bill for enactment. This committee was constituted of persons who were connected with library movement for many years. A draft bill was prepared and after certain modifications it was enacted in 1979. West Bengal became the fifth State in India to have library law. This Act was further amended in 1982 and 1985. Chief features of this Act are : Constituting the State Library Council with Minister In-Charge of Library Services as Chairman and the Local Library Authority at the district level with District Magistrate as Chairman ; A separate Directorate for Library Services with Director of Library Services as top Officer and District Library Officers and their offices at the district level ; Democratization of the management of library services by representation from the Bengal Library Association, library employees, library experts, local governments (Zilla Parishad, Panchayat Samity, Municipality/Corporation), Members of the Legislative assembly, educationists and govt. officials in the State Library Council and the Local Library Authority ; Bringing different govt. controlled and sponsored public libraries and their employees within the purview of this Act so that an integrated public library system can be developed under the supervision and control of the Director of Library Services, the District Library Officer, the State Library Council and the Local Library Authorities.

33 *INCREASED BUDGET ALLOCATION FOR LIBRARY SERVICES*

Considering the acute financial difficulties faced by the libraries, the State Govt. decided to enhance the budget allocations for improvement, expansion and maintenance of public library services. Accordingly, the following amount of money were allocated by the Left Front Govt. during the last five financial years :

1979-80	: Rs.	2,26,46,000·00
1980-81	: Rs.	4,01,00,000·00
1981-82	: Rs.	4,28,40,000·00
1982-83	: Rs.	4,66,39,000·00
1983-84	: Rs.	5,00,26,000·00
1984-85	: Rs.	5,50,00,000·00

This expenditure on public library services being the highest in any of the states in India.

34 *NEW LIBRARIES IN RURAL AND URBAN AREAS*

Along with increased budget allocation, programmes were taken up for development of libraries in rural and urban areas of West Bengal. In contrast to the establishment of 762 Govt.-controlled and sponsored public libraries in West Bengal during first thirty years after independence (i.e., 1947-1977), programmes were taken by the Left Front Govt. to create 1659 Govt.-Controlled and sponsored public libraries of the following types :

1 Calcutta Metropolitan Library, 83 town libraries and 1575 rural and primary unit libraries. Growth of Govt. controlled and sponsored public libraries during post-independence days are shown by following tables :—

(1) Table showing growth of govt. controlled and sponsored public libraries before and during Left Front period in different districts :—

	Libraries established during the years : 1947-1977 (30 years)						Libraries established during the years : 1977-1985 (8 years)				
	SCL	DL	CL	TL	RL	Total	DL	TL	RL	Total	Grand total
Bankura	—	1	—	1	38	40	—	2	83	85	125
Birbhum	—	1	—	1	42	44	—	4	70	74	118
Burdwan	—	2	—	4	55	61	—	2	139	141	202
Calcutta	1	—	—	1	5	7	1	3	108	112	119
Cooch Behar	—	1	—	1	39	41	—	3	65	68	109
Darjeeling	—	1	1	3	60	65	—	2	57	59	124
Hooghly	—	2	—	4	53	59	—	9	87	96	155
Howrah	—	1	—	1	52	54	—	3	81	84	138
Jalpaiguri	—	1	—	1	34	36	—	2	68	70	106
Malda	—	1	—	2	27	30	—	2	69	71	101
Midnapur	—	2	—	5	67	74	—	6	190	196	270
Murshidabad	—	1	—	2	38	41	—	6	110	116	157
Nadia	—	1	—	3	36	40	—	4	72	76	116
Purulia	—	1	—	1	38	40	—	2	71	73	113
24 Parganas	—	3	2	6	82	93	—	31	235	266	359
West Dinajpur	—	1	—	1	35	37	—	2	70	72	109
Total	1	20	3	37	701	762	1	83	1575	1659	2421

N.B. (A) SCL—State Central Library ; DL—District Library ; CL—Central Library (Town Library Status); TL—Town Library which also includes Sub-Divisional Library ; RL—Rural Library which also includes Area Library and Primary Unit Library, as they are of equal status.

(B) In 1985-86 financial year, the state Govt. has also approved the creation of following two more libraries : (i) One additional district library at Siliguri (Darjeeling District) ; (ii) One city central library at Durgapur (Burdwan District). With these two libraries total number of govt. controlled and sponsored libraries will be 2423.

(2) Table showing different types of libraries in districts :—

Type Of Library	Bankura	Birbhum	Burdwan	Calcutta	Cooch Behar	Darjeeling	Hooghly	Howrah	Jalpaiguri	Malda	Midnapur	Murshidabad	Nadia	Purulia	24 Paraganas	West Dinajpur	Total
State Central Library	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
District Library	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	3	1	21
Central Library	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	3
Town/ Sub-divisional Library	3	5	6	4	4	5	13	4	3	4	11	8	7	3	37	3	120
Rural/Area/ Primary Unit Library	121	112	194	113	104	117	140	133	102	96	257	148	108	109	317	105	2276
Total	125	118	202	119	109	124	155	138	106	101	270	157	116	113	359	109	2421

N.B.—(A Town Library and Sub-divisional library are of equal status in all respect. Town Libraries situated at sub-divisional head quarters are known as Sub-divisional Libraries. Town Libraries are situated in municipal towns.

(B) Rural/Area/Primary Unit Libraries are of equal status in all respect. Rural Libraries are situated in rural areas. Area Libraries were established during Second Plan period to serve an integrated area. But in reality, functioning of area libraries are same as rural and primary unit libraries. Primary Unit Libraries are those which are located in different wards of big towns and cities. Maintenance grants, number of staff and staff salary, management rules, etc., for these libraries (Rural/Area/Primary Unit Libraries) are same. So, they are of equal status.

(C) Central Libraries were established during the second plan period to serve an integrated educational complex area. Status of these libraries are now same as town libraries. These Cenral Labries are located at Banipur (Govt.), Kalimpong (Govt.) and Narendrapur (Govt. sponsored).

(D) District Libraries are located at district head quarters. Following districts have more than one district library considering the area and population of the district, as well as, importance of particular library :—24 Parganas (Rahara, Vidyanagar, Taki), Midnapore (Midnapore, Tamluk), Burdwan (Burdwan, Asansol), Hooghly (Chinsurah-Hooghly, Uttarpara).

(E) Two more govt. libraries are going to be established during the financial year 1985-86. These will be located at Siliguri (Additional District Library), Durgapur (City Central Library).

(F) Out of these 2421 Govt. controlled and sponsored public libraries, following are directly govt. controlled and rest are govt. sponsored :—

(i) State Central Library (at Calcutta)

(ii) Calcutta Metropolitan Library (District Library status)

(iii) Deshbandhu District Library (at Darjeeling)

(iv) Uttarpara Joykrishna Public Library (District Library status)

(v) Taki Govt. District Library (District Library status)

(vi) Institute De Chandernagar (Town Library status)

(vii) Digha Govt. Library (Town Libary status)

(viii) Central Library, Kalimpong (Town Library status)

(ix) Central Library, Banipur (Town Library status)

(3) *Guidelines followed :—*

The following guidelines were adopted in establishing new Govt.-sponsored public libraries in different districts :

(i) Population and the number of existing Govt. and Govt.-sponsored libraries in districts were taken into consideration while allocating new quotas for public libraries in different districts.

(ii) Priorities were given for conversion of existing public-managed libraries into Govt.-sponsored public libraries. Where no such libraries exist, steps were taken to establish new library in view of the demands.

(iii) Priorities were also given to cover villages having more than 5000 population, which were not yet covered by Govt.-controlled or Govt.-sponsored Public library system.

(iv) Municipal towns not yet covered by Govt.-controlled or sponsored Public library system were covered by town libraries and towns having more than 1 lakh population were covered by Primary unit libraries in addition to Town libraries.

(v) Conversion or creation of sponsored libraries were done through actual inspection of library spot by a team and also after considering the views of Panchayats, Panchayat samitis, Zilla parishads, Municipalities and thus involving a larger section of the people in library development work.

(vi) A policy was taken up to establish atleast 2-3 libraries in each and every block scattered in rural areas.

(vii) The entire scheme of public library development was prepared in accordance with the recommendations of workshop-cum-seminar convened by the State Govt. for this purpose (28th—29th July, 1979) and thus involving large number of people in library development programme.

35 *ENHANCED MAINTENANCE GRANTS FOR LIBRARIES*

(a) The next step that the Left Front Govt. took up was to enhance the maintenance grants to government-controlled and sponsored libraries. Besides increasing grants for purchase of books, new grants were introduced for purchase of periodicals, furniture, and for binding and preservation. The following table will show the earlier position of maintenance grants in comparison to present position.

: i TABLE SHOWING RATE OF ANNUAL GRANTS (IN RUPEES)

(a) indicates pre 1977 period; (b) indicates post 1977 period

Items of grant	State Central Library	Uttarpara J. K. Library	District Libraries	Sub-Divisional/ Town Libraries	Rural/Area/ Primary Unit Libraries
	(1)	(1)	(20)	(120)	(2276)
BOOKS					
(a) Pre 1977	(a) 50000	(a) 25000	(a) 3000	(a) 1800	(a) No grant
(b) Post 1977	(b) 50000	(b) 25000	(b) 20000	(b) 5000	(b) 1500
PERIODICALS					
(a) Pre 1977	(a) No grant	(a) No grant	(a) No grant	(a) No grant	(a) No grant
(b) Post 1977	(b) 35000	(b) 2000	(b) 2000	(b) 1000	(b) 500
FURNITURE					
(a) Pre 1977	(a) No grant	(a) No grant	(a) No grant	(a) No grant	(a) No grant
(b) Post 1977	(b) 10000	(b) 3000	(b) 2000	(b) 1000	(b) 500
BINDING & PRESERVATION					
(a) Pre 1977	(a) No grant	(a) No grant	(a) No grant	(a) No grant	(a) No grant
(b) Post 1977	(b) 15000	(b) 10000	(b) 3000	(b) 1000	(b) 500
CONTINGENCY					
(a) Pre 1977	(a) 31000	(a) 11000	(a) 2000	(a) 1200	(a) 600
(b) Post 1977	(b) 35000	(b) 11000	(b) 8000	(b) 2500	(b) 1000
MOBILE VAN					
(a) Pre 1977	(a) 42000	—	(a) No grant	—	—
(b) Post 1977	(b) 42000	—	(b) 15000	—	—
TOTAL GRANT FOR EACH LIBRARY					
(a) Pre 1977	(a) 123000	(a) 36000	(a) 5000	(a) 3000	(a) 600
(b) Post 1977	(b) 187000	(b) 51000	(b) 50000	(b) 10500	(b) 4000

N.B.—(a) Three more govt. libraries get grants at the rate of Town/Sub- divisional Libraries.
(b) Newly established Calcutta Metropolitan Liorary gets grant on an ad-hoc basis.

f 2 TABLE SHOWING A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF TOTAL MAINTENANCE GRANTS

It will be intersting here to make a comparative study of total maintenance grants (excluding salary and allowances) under different heads in pre-1977 and post-1977 periods :

Items of grant (annual)	Pre 1977 (Total amount spent annually for 762 govt.-controlled and sponsored libraries) (in Rs.)	Post 1977 (Total amount spent annually for 2420 govt.-controlled and sponsored libraries*) (in Rs.)
Recurring grant for purchase of books	2 lakh 4 thousand (only for 61 libraries, no book grant for 701 Rural/Area Libraries)	44 lakh 74 thousand 4 hundred**
Recurring grant for purchase of periodicals	No Grant for any library	13 Lakh 36 thousand
Recurring grant for purchase of furniture	No Grant for any library	13 lakh 12 thousand
Recurring grant for Binding and preservation	No Grant for any library	13 lakh 43 thousand
Recurring grant for contingency expenditure	5 lakh 48 thousand 6 hundred	27 lakh 81 thousand 5 hundred
Recurring grant for mobile van	42 thousand (only the State Central Library)	3 lakh 27 thousand (for the State Central Library and for 19 Dist. Libraries)
Total recurring grants for maintenance	7 lakh 94 thousand 6 hundred	1 crore 15 lakh 73 thousand 9 hundred

N. B. *1. Newly established Calcutta Metropolitan Library was excluded as it receives grant on ad hoc basis at present.

**2. Besides annual grant of Rupees 44 lakh 74 thousand 4 hundred for purchase of books to govt. controlled and sponsored libraries, the State Govt. also spends annually another amount of Rupees 10—15 lakhs for purchase of books from the State Book Fair, for purchase of books under matching grant scheme of the Raja Rammohan Roy Library Foundation and also grants to non-sponsored libraries for purchase of books.

(b) Besides these annual grants, the Left Front Govt. also sanctioned following ad hoc grants to public libraries :

(i) Ad hoc grant of Rs. 40 lakh 52 thousand in the International Children Year for establishment of children section in 759 old public libraries.

(ii) Ad hoc grant of Rs. 35 lakh building grant during the years 1978-79 to 1981-82 to some old public libraries and also to libraries affected by flood.

36 *GRANTS FOR NON-GOVT. LIBRARIES*

Special grants to non-govt., non-sponsored public libraries for purchase of books :—

1978-79	..	7 lakh 89 thousand 7 hundred
1979-80	..	10 lakh
1980-81	..	10 lakh
1983-84	..	5 lakh

37 *DIRECTORATE OF LIBRARY SERVICES, STATE LIBRARY COUNCIL AND LOCAL LIBRARY AUTHORITIES*

Along with the programme for development of public libraries and increased budgetary allocation for their maintenance, the Left Front Govt. took following steps in fulfilment of the objectives and directions of the West Bengal Public Libraries Act, 1979, as amended in 1982 and 1985.

(i) Created a separate Directorate of Library Services under a Director to guide, control and supervise the functioning of the libraries.

(ii) Constituted the State Library Council to function as apex advisory body in all matters relating to libraries and library services in this state. This body has been constituted with the following categories of members : Minister-in-Charge of Library Services (Chairman), Director of Library Services (Ex-officio Member-Secretary), Educationists (4), Legislators (4), Experts in Library Science and service (4), Other govt. officials (5), Representatives of the Bengal Library Association (2), Rtpresentative of the employees of the system (2), Representatives of the Local Library Authorities (2), District Librarian (1), Librarian of the State Central Library (1), Librarian of the National Library (1), District Library Officer (1).

(iii) Constituted Local Library Authorities in each and every district of the state to function as body corporate with legal powers to plan, coordinate and supervise public library services in the concerned district. These bodies have been constituted with the following categories of members : The District Magistrate (Chairman ; in case of Calcutta the Director of Library Services), the District Library Officer (Ex-officio Member-Secretary), Representatives of the local govts. (Zilla Parishad, Panchayat Samity, Municipalities/ Corporations) (5), Educationists (3), Legislators (2), Members of the Managing Committees of Public Libraries (2), Representatives of the Bengal Library Association (2), Representatives of the associations of the employees of different public libraries (2), District Social Education Officer (1), District Librarian (1|2|3 as the case may be depending on the number of District Libraries in the district).

(iv) Prepared different rules for proper functioning of the State Library Council and the Local Library Authorities.

38 *PUBLIC LIBRARY MANAGEMENT RULES*

The state govt. has also prepared and implemented, a set of rules, known as 'Public Library Management Rules', to administer the Govt.-sponsored public libraries in a democratic manner. In these rules democratic participation of members as well as supervision by the Local Library Authority and the Directorate of Library Services have been ensured.

381 STAFF PATTERN IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES

The present staff pattern of govt. controlled and sponsored public libraries in West Bengal are as follows :—

No. of posts in each library	SCL	UPL	CML	DL	CL	TL/SL	RL/AL/ PUL
Librarian	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Asst. Librarian	4	2	4	—	1	—	—
Technical Asst.	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
Library Asst.	8	3	6	2	—	1	—
Library Attendant	2	—	—	2	1	—	—
Head Clerk	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Upper Division Clerk	1	—	1	—	—	—	—
Lower Division Clerk	1	—	1	—	—	—	—
Typist	1	—	1	—	—	—	—
Accountant	1	—	1	—	—	—	—
Cashier	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Projectionist	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Driver	1	—	—	1	—	—	—
Cleaner	1	—	—	1	—	—	—
Durwan/Night Guard	4	2	2	2	—	1	—
Peon/Cycle Peon/Duftry cum Binder/Farash	6	4	1	1	1	1	1
Mali	1	1	—	—	—	—	—
Sweeper	2	1	1	—	—	—	—
Total	36	15	19	10	4	4	2

N. B. (1) SCL—State Central Library; UPL—Uttarpara Public Library; CML—Calcutta Metropolitan Library; DL—District Library; CL—Central Library; TL—Town Library; SL—Sub-Divisional Library; RL—Rural Library; AL—Area Library; PUL—Primary Unit Library.

(2) There are following variations: Taki Govt. District Library & West Dinajpur District Library—1 Asst. Librarian & 1 Library Asst. (instead of 2 Library Asst. as in other District Libraries).

(3) Additional posts in following libraries—Taki Govt. District Library (1 Mali); North Bengal State Library (Cooch Behar District Library) (1 peon and 1 Accounts Clerk); Darjeeling Govt. District Library (1 Binder).

(4) Total sanctioned strength of staff in these libraries (other than the staff in the offices of the Directorate of Library Services and the District Library Officers and the Training Centres)—5311. Out of these staffs, professional staffs are 2589 (with B. Lib. & Inf. Sc. as minimum qualifications—161 and with Certificate in Library Science as minimum qualifications—2428).

391 BETTER PAY AND SERVICE CONDITIONS FOR LIBRARY EMPLOYEES

Along with the above mentioned steps, the following measures were taken up by the Left Front Govt. to improve the pay and service conditions of the employees of the public libraries :—

(i) Introduction of revised pay scales for the employees of the public libraries with effect from 1st April 1981 on the basis of recommendations of the Pay Committee appointed by the State Govt.

Salient features of these pay scales are :

Posts	Prescribed Qualifications	Unrevised Pay Scale	Revised Pay Scale
1	2	3	4
Librarian (District Library)	Master Degree+ Degree/Diploma in Library Sc.	Rs. 270-540/- + Allowance of Rs. 25.00	Rs. 440-1170/- with higher initial start at Rs. 560/-
Librarian (Town/Sub-divisional Library)	Graduation + Degree/Diploma in Library Science	Rs. 237-404/-	Rs. 425-1050/- with higher initial start at Rs. 530/-
Librarian (Rural/Primary Unit/Area Library	S.F.+Certificate in Library Science	Rs. 184-270/-	Rs. 300-685/-
Library Asstt. (in different libraries)	(a) Graduation+ B. Lib. Sc.	(a) No Scale	(a) Rs. 425-895/-
	(b) S.F.+Certificate in Lib. Sc.	(b) 184-270/-	(b) Rs. 300-685/-
Library Attendant (in different libraries)	—	Rs. 155-185/-	Rs. 230-414/-
Driver (in State Central Library and District Libraries)	—	Rs. 175-230/-	Rs. 280-617/-
Peon/Cycle Peon/ Cleaner/Durwan/ Sweeper (in different libraries)	—	Rs. 130-165/-	Rs. 220-388/-
		-Do.-	-Do.-

(ii) Discrimination regarding payment of Dearness Allowance was abolished and the employees of the public libraries were given Dearness Allowance at the same rate as those given to the employees of the State Govt.

(iii) The following economic benefits from which the employees were so long being deprived were introduced : Medical Allowance, House Rent Allowance, Hill Allowance for the employees of the hill area in the state.

(iv) Pension and other retirement benefits have been introduced.

(v) Service Rules for the employees have been introduced.

More than five thousand employees of the Govt.-controlled and sponsored libraries in the state have been benefited by these measures of the Left Front Govt.

392 TRAINING FACILITIES

Along with the public library development programme, the Left Front Govt. also prepared and implemented scheme for development and expansion of library science training. A Seminar was organised by the State Govt. in 1981 to discuss the syllabus for training in library science at the certificate level and to draw up a scheme for such training. The Seminar, which was attended by teachers of library science and librarians, finalized the syllabus, including a scheme for training. At present following centres of training at the certificate level are fully financed by the State Government :—

(a) Rahara Training Centre, at the Rahara Ramakrishna Mission Boys' Home District Library ;

(b) Kalimpong Training Centre, at the Kalimpong Janata College ;

(c) Banipur Training College, at the Banipur Janata College.

The Bengal Library Association also receives grant for its training at certificate level. The State Govt. is also giving financial assistance to the Jadavpur University for B. Lib. & Inform. Sc. course of eighteen months duration for working librarians in the evening.

393 LIBRARY FACILITIES FOR CHILDREN

The Left Front Govt. took following steps for extension of library facilities to the children :—

(i) In the International Children Year an ad-hoc grant of Rurees 40 (forty) lakh and 50 (fifty) thousand was given to 762 old govt. controlled and sponsored public libraries for establishment of children section.

(ii) In the "Public Library Management Rules" it has been stipulated that the children upto the age 14 are not required to pay any subscription or deposit to become member of a Govt. controlled or sponsored public library.

394 BOOK FAIRS

The Left Front Govt. also decided to assist Book fairs at the State and district levels. Purposes of such book fairs are :

(a) to provide facilities to librarians and book lovers to see and consult large number of titles in one compact area for selection and purchase ;

(*b*) to provide facilities to publishers, big or small, individual or institutional, to exhibit their products to the people and thus benefitting the book trade ;

(c) to promote love for books among the people and thus developing reading habit among then.

Book fairs are now regularly organised at the State and district levels. Even small towns are organising book fairs. Book fairs have now become part

and parcel of cultural life of the people of West Bengal. The first West Bengal Book Fair was inaugurated on the 20th December, 1980 by the Chief Minister Shri Jyoti Basu. This year (1986) the West Bengal Book Fair is being organised by the Govt. of West Bengal, in collaboration with the Bengal Library Association, West Bengal Public Library Employees Association, Raja Rammohan Roy Library Foundation and different Publishers Associations of the state.

395 BOOK SELECTION TOOLS

The State Govt. also took programme of publishing following tools for Selection of Bengali books :—

(a) a comprehensive "Bengali Books in Print", published in 1980, enlisting nearly 10,000 titles in print ;

(b) a selected list of Bengali books on different subjects (other than fiction, short stories and drama) published every yeyar.

(*c*) A programme has been taken to prepare selected list of books in Nepali, Hindi and Urdu languages.

396 BOOK SELECTION POLICY

In selecting books following guidelines are followed :—

(*a*) Classics, subjects and informative books, reference books, books representing different views and ideas, books for healthy recreation and entertainment be selected in libraries. Book propagating cultural and social degeneration and decadance, preaching communalism, obscurantism and parochialism should be avoided.

(*b*) For at least 30 percent of the annual book grant, titles be selected from "Selected List of Bengali Books", published by the State Govt. every year.

(c) For another 70 percent of the annual book grant libraries are permitted to select titles according to their choice, but the general guidelines for selection of good books must be followed.

397 COOPERATION WITH RAJA RAMMOHAN ROY LIBRARY FOUNDATION

The State Govt. also cooperates with the Raja Rammohan Roy Library Foundation by providing matching grant to purchase books for distribution among public libraries. A state level committee has been constituted to select books for this purpose.

398 COOPERATION WITH LIBRARY ASSOCIATIONS

Lastly, in all matters of library development, opinions of persons connected with library movement and their organisations are sought. In fact, the Bengal Library Association and the West Bengal Public Library Employees Association have played important roles in the Library development of this State during this period.

4 UNION GOVT. AND PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICE

The Central Govt's role in developing public library services in our country is not at all encouraging during last 38 years after independence. In this connection following points may be noted :—

41 NO NATIONAL LIBRARY AND INFORMATION POLICY

The library and information services play a very important role in socio-economic development of country. Though there is a demand for a national policy on library and information services, it has not yet been formulated during last 38 years.

42 RECOMMENDATIONS OF ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR LIBRARIES NOT IMPLEMENTED

The Govt. of India appointed an Advisory Committee for Libraries in 1958 to review the library situation in the country and to recommend measures to be adopted for improvement of library services. The committee made some valuable recommendations. But uptil now these recommedations have not been implemented.

43 NEGLIGIBLE EXPENDITURE FOR PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICE AND FUNCTIONING OF RAJA RAMMOHAN ROY LIBRARY FOUNDATION

To shirk its direct responsibility about public library service, the Govt. of India has created the Raja Rammohan Roy Library Foundation in 1972. A critical review of the functioning of the foundation will reveal that it spends much less than a paise percapita for public library service. The Foundation, which is dominated by Govt. officials, is functioning like a cripple body for want of fund and proper imagination.

44 NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY AND LIBRARY SERVICES

The Ministry of Education of the Govt. of India has recently circulated a document on national education policy. This policy statement reflects an attitude which, if implemented, will do great harm to our education system. Its advocacy for privatisation of education shirking the responsibility of the state to provide education to the citizens, its plea for so called 'model schools' in each district submerging the entire nation into illiteracy, its absurd proposition to delink degrees from job and many other propositions are derogatory ideas from the standpoint of mass education. The document has uttered not a single word about the importance of public library service. No programme of universalization of elementary education, adult education and non-formal education will be successful unless a free-integreted public library system is developed for retention of newly acquired literacy and for further expansion of acquired education. The document is altogether silent on all these vital issues of mass education.

5th SOME OBSERVATIONS ABOUT WEST BENGAL PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM

There is no doubt that the library movement in this state has received tremendous impetus from the library development work initiated by the Left Front Govt. While appreciating these achivements, certain observations are mentioned below for further improvement and expansion of library services in this state :—

(a) The main objective of public library system is to provide free services to the people. In the 'Public Library Management Rules' provisions have been made for free services to children. But for adults, restrictions of subscription and deposit still exist. As the State Govt. is spending huge amount of money for public library services, steps to be taken gradually to introduce free services to the people in fulfilment of the objectives of the public library system.

(b) With the introduction of massive programme for library development, the number of documents and users in public libraries have no doubt increased to a great extent. But still their services are confined to a section of the upper and middle classes of society. Special efforts be made to bring neo-literates and poorer section of the people, women and children within the purview of public library services. With this in view programme of document acquisition and services of the libraries be re-planned.

(c) Services of public libraries are uptil now restricted to lending and reading room services. That public libraries can also play a vital role in dissemination of information to the people for their socio-economic development is yet to be established in our country, though this type of service is provided by public libraries in different developed and developing countries of the world. An attempt should be made to introduce information service in public libraries.

(d) Public library service in a developing country like India should play an important role in adult education programme. Public library service, adult education programme and programmes for social and non-formal education should be brought under one umbrella to initiate comprehensive programme for mass education. These interlinked functions are now carried out in disjoined manner, resulting in wastage of money and manpower. This should be avoided.

(e) An individual library has limited resource. But the collective resources of all the libraries in our state is not bad, rather impressive. Inter-library cooperation programmes at the state and district levels should be undertaken for resource sharing among libraries.

(f) A programme be taken to produce literature for neo-literates and for persons educated upto primary level. These books be related to life and living of the common people, social and cultural issues and scientific phenomena, etc.

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